UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Radio Service

OFFICE OF
INFORMATION

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, October 16, 1936

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "THE HONEY CROP." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture. Publication available, Leaflet No. 113-L, "Honey and Some of Its Uses."

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Every year in the fall, the "honey man" used to call at our door, and let us sample his honey before we bought it. I'm reminded of him because I've just been reading the new "Market Basket" prepared by the Bureau of Home Economics, of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and it's all about honey and this year's honey crop.

The Market Basket mentions Maeterlinck's "Life of the Bees", and how the bees make honey from start to finish -- collecting the nectar from a great variety of flowers, modifying it, and storing it in combs in their hives. The strained or extracted honey constitutes about three-fourths of the market supply, I learned, while the comb honey that we like to eat in chunks with hot biscuits is sold either in whole combs, just as the bees have stored it, or in sections cut from combs.

Differences in flavor and color between one kind of honey and another are due to the kind of flowers from which the bees got the nectar. Sweet clover, white and alsike clovers, and alfalfa are the chief sources of honey in the United States. The important commercial honeys come mostly from the clovers or clover blends. Blending two or more honeys insures greater uniformity of color, flavor, and consistency, during different seasons and from year to year. Other flowers mentioned as good sources of honey are tupelo, orange and cotton blossoms, from the South, wild sage in California, star-thistle on the Pacific Coast, buckwheat, mesquite, and fireweed. Late in the season, goldenrod, heartsease and asters often supply nectar for honey. The flower flavor preferred is a matter of personal taste.

Although the use is optional, a great many honey dealers follow the grades and standards set up by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. There are seven color classifications: Water white, extra white, white, extra light amber, light amber, amber, and dark. The grades of honey are independent of color. Those for extracted honey are based on freeness from foreign matter, and those for comb-section on finish and whiteness of the cappings. All honey going into interstate commerce must be stamped with its net weight as required by the Federal pure-food laws, and must be pure honey as defined by the Food and Drug Administration.

What about this year's honey crop? There will be about the same quantity of honey as in 1935, say the economists, although the beekeepers have encountered many difficulties due to winter freezing and summer drought. The

quality of this year's honey is exceptionally fine. In most sections it is white to water white in color, heavy in body, extra good in flavor. We housewives are not the only ones who buy honey, you know. Many bakers use it in cakes, cookies, and special breads, and candy makers put it in nougats and other confections.

Honey is composed largely of two simple sugars -- levulose or fruit sugar, and dextrose, or grape sugar. Both of these sugars, and consequently honey, can be easily assimilated by the body. In moderate amounts, honey is a wholesome addition to the list of sweets. It may be used in place of sugar in modifying a baby's milk. It is not an important source of minerals, although it contains small amounts of iron, calcium, and phosphorus. It has no detectable vitamin value. The characteristic flavor depends on aromatic substances in the nectar of various flowers.

Now about using honey in cooking. Extracted honey has about one-fifth less energy value than an equal weight of sugar because it is about one-fifth water. This water content affects the amount of liquid used in a recipe when honey is substituted for sugar. The liquid must be reduced, however, more than the difference between the water content of the honey and the dry sugar, according to the consistency of the honey and also according to the proportion of honey used.

An example will make this point clear, I think. If medium-thick honey is substituted for one-half the sugar in cake or quick-bread recipes, reduce the liquid one-fourth. If honey is substituted for all the sugar, reduce the liquid one-half. If honey is very thin or very thick, this proportion may have to be altered.

Honey has much the same consistency as molasses, and may be used in place of it, measure for measure, in gingerbread, browned bread, and steamed puddings. But the cooking specialists point out that honey contains less acid than molasses and therefore soda is not needed. So add one teaspoon of baking powder for each quarter teaspoon of soda omitted. In making any honey cakes or breads, mix the honey with the liquid, and bake at the lowest temperature possible, to prevent change of flavor and too rapid browning.

Fruit cakes, steamed puddings, cookies and candies stay moist longer if made with honey, because the honey takes up moisture rapidly. This is an advantage when making goodies in advance, especially toward Christmas time, but not so desirable a quality when it comes to confections and frostings which may get too soft and sticky to be attractive, if made with honey.

Store honey in a dry place. Do not be alarmed if low temperatures cause honey to become partly cloudy or partially crystallized. Most honeys crystallize on aging. They can easily be liquefied by warming the container in moderately hot water -- not above 140 degrees Fahrenheit. Higher temperatures will injure both the flavor and color of honey.

That's all of the Market Basket. If you want some honey recipes you can send for Leaflet No. 113-L, "Honey and Some of Its Uses," which is free from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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